CLAY GEERDES' COMIX WAVE 124
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EL VIBORA 149 is $10 from J. M. Berengueuer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain. **KISS COMIX** 8 is $10. Spain's ultimate sex comic. Adults only.

New on the zine scene is Mike DeAngelo with **PRIMAL SCREAM** 1, a print-out zine re horror and schlock movies. A lot of laughs in the first one. Trade Mike yours for his. 2828 James Street, #303, Syracuse, NY 13206-2256.

Yes, there is an **Abbott and Costello Fan Club**. It's $8 to join and you get lots of data about the comedians and their career. POB 2084, Toluca Lake, CA 91610-0084.

HUMOR LIVES IN CHICAGO

Chicago has a new monthly humor magazine, **BONUS**. The first issue has a cover by Robert Crumb and the first part of the most recent interview with the now-expatriate cartoonist. POB 3433, Merchandise Mart Station, Chicago, IL 60654. Send a couple of bucks for postage and handling. Carole Sobocinski is the editor. #2 has a cover by Skip Williamson and the first interview he's done in quite awhile. Skip drew Snappy Sammy Smoot in the halcyon days of underground comix and worked for Playboy for several years.

The eighth volume of **THE COMPLETE CRUMB** came out late in June and features Fritz the Cat on the cover.

Richie Prosch has **FARMBOY FUNNIES 2**. 50¢ Stamp. 305 Pinehaven, Laurens, SC 29360.

THE SUBLIMINAL ZONE CHRONICLES COMIX is $2 or trade from Arte Ala Carte, POB 105, Canton, CT 06019 USA.

THE MARCH OF CRIME

The weed of crime bears bitter fruit.
The Shadow

If Dostoyevsky were writing today, he wouldn't call it *CRIME AND PUNISHMENT*. He'd call it **CRIME AND ENTERTAINMENT**. Just think of all the sociological and psychological theses in progress dealing with the relationship between crime and entertainment, stuff like the Serial Killer Assassin as Media Popstar and From Lizzie to Jeffie. Ann Rule,, who wrote Ted Bundy's life story, went on to make a career out of true crime books. These days Crime is seen by many of the amoral young as a legitimate ladder to success. I just read **THE MORMON MURDERS**, the tale of a forger and bomber named Mark Hoffman. This guy committed so many crimes and rip-offs, it wasn't funny, and he only got 15 years. Ah, well, Richard Nixon has done no time, and the Bush family is still on the loose, but relax, that mad murdering hippie, Charley Manson, is still in the slammer.

Would you believe Ruth Slawson at NBC has had *dozens* of pitches for television movies about the Jeffrey Daumer multiple murder case in Milwaukee? No deal, she said. Too weird and repulsive for television. "The best case," she said, "involves everyday people, somebody like your next-door neighbor doing something unexpected." Hell, my next door neighbors would rent a video about Daumer and sit there eating pizza as he offed one teenaged boy after another. Wasn't Jeff just trying to fulfill the Friday the 13th/Nightmare on Elm Street/Hallowe'en teen slasher prophecy?

These are weird times we live in, folks. I was in Lincoln, Nebraska, recently and my sister told me the penitentiary there is filled with young people who did nothing more serious than smoke a little marijuana. The valium addicts who work the banks and loan companies commit megacrimes and get a few months in country club jails. Liquor and nicotine ads are aimed at young kids and when the weak ones take the bait they get busted and do time. What this does is maintain a large pool of unemployable ex-convicts who must commit more crimes or subsist on welfare.

When I was a boy trying to get my first job, I was always asked if I had had any experience. Well, of course, I didn't. Where would I have gotten it? I was also asked if I had ever been arrested. I hadn't, but if I had I doubt that I would have gotten the shitwork jobs I did get. At that time, I could have lied easily enough because potential employers had no way to check my answers out, but today everything you have done is linked to your social security and driver's license numbers and that information might as well be public, because it is readily available to any company for a nominal fee. Today's professional data banks keep track of just about everything you do. If you have a single credit card, your privacy is nil. Everything you buy is recorded. Every video you rent is recorded. *Surprise, a lot of video stores keep a file of everything you rent*. They do this because it helps them to know what to order and what isn't being rented, but this file can work against you. If the police or the FBI or any other official agency wants to see it, they can.

With the huge surplus of local and immigrant labor available today, companies do not have to hire anyone with any kind of criminal record. An arrest without conviction is not a criminal record and innocent people are mistakenly arrested every day of the year in an overly zealous police-dominated country, but if you are an employer with access to thousands of able bodies, why take a chance on someone who has been picked up for shoplifting, vandalism, or smoking a joint? A neighbor of mine told me he was stopped for a traffic violation and found that the police still had a charge against him in the computer that dated from 1969! He had a beef with the police during a protest march and had been told that it had been erased when the charge was dismissed by a judge. Not so. In our weird electronically watched society, that candy bar you lifted at 7-11 when you were a kid can come back to cost you a job twenty years later.

We have a real paradox in America in 1992, because crime is glorified via entertainment--several dozen crimes against people and property are committed in the first few minutes of **BATMAN RETURNS!**--and people wonder why some of their children imitate what they see. We see arguments about the effects of cinematic violence on real violence on one or another of the talk shows nearly every week. Well, monkey see, monkey do. *If corporations are willing to spend billions on prime time advertising to back up their belief that you can brainwash people to buy a product with constant repetition [and sales figures show they are right], then only a fool can say that the glorification of violence and vandalism promulgated through films like **BATMAN RETURNS, LETHAL WEAPON, ROBOCOP, DARKMAN, TERMINATOR**, et. al., fails to develop in the young mind a propensity toward violent and anti-social behavior.* This is not true of all young people, nor is it true of all the young people who watch these paeans to gore and anarchy, but it is true for a growing block of people who, understandably, find it difficult to distinguish between the illusions on the screen and the reality on the street.

Cute, huh? I personally found **BATMAN RETURNS** to be a piece of humorless, disgusting, amoral, insensitive, dehumanized, negative rot, and what surprises me is that McDonald's would want to tarnish their peachy keen family image by associating their golden buns with it. That film is so far from Bob Kane's original conception of Batman that I am surprised he would put his name on it.

This has been another infotaining advertorial brought to you by Comix Suave.

In case you wondered why the interest was so low on your checking account

The nation's commercial banks earned a record 7.6 billion in the first three months of this year, up 36 percent from a year ago, despite continued large losses on loans particularly for commercial real estate, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Reported.

John Berry
The Washington Post
June 11, 1992

Dear Uncle Clay--

I've been drawing a lot of strips and cartoons, but I don't know what to do with them or where to send them. How do you get into this cartooning business anyway?

Jim Winkler

Dear Jim--

How would I know? I never got into it. Seriously, there are as many ways of getting into comics as there are most businesses, but it may be trickier than going in the door of Marvel and filling out the application form. All I can tell you are some of the things cartoonists do. I'm assuming you know the craft which means what kind of ink and paper to use, what size to draw, how to use zipatone and other technical stuff you get from a good art class. If not, Read no further.

If you have material ready to show someone, you have to decide who you want to show it to and how you are going to get your art to that person. The mail is the worst method, but if you choose it, there are some strict rules. Never send your original art anywhere. Always get good stats and submit the stats. Don't expect anything to be returned unless you have included the return postage, because most companies are not going to pay your bills. You can include a cover letter, but make it short, because whoever gets your stuff is going to look at the art, not your letter.

The best method for getting considered is to attend one of the major comic conventions during the season. Normally, cons take place from early Spring to late summer. **The Comic Buyer's Guide [CBG]** routinely lists all of them as well as display ads for them. So does **The Comics Journal [TCJ]**. If your goal is to show your art to some of the companies, you want to get a nice folio and choose your best work. I would be sure to cover the work, because it will be handled and there are people at cons who are as sloppy as the kids at home where spilling things are concerned. It's not necessary to carry your originals around. In fact, it is better to have sharp stats that will fit a nice 11x14 or 16x20 portfolio. If you use the convention to your advantage, you will make it a point to attend the panel discussions and lectures given by the people and companies you want to contact, preferably before you approach them with your work. You will not be the only person there with art to show, so the more you know about the person you have decided to approach the better your meeting will go. It might be fun to show your art to someone for a bit of ego boo, but if that person is not *the one* at the company you are wasting valuable time.

Skill, talent, and expertise are taken for granted. As a newcomer, you are competing for space against people who have been in the business for many years. You might be the next Wally Wood, but that doesn't mean you'll be hired on the spot and given your own title to work on.

At a con, you may think of yourself as an artist, but that is not your function. Not if you want in. If you are after a job in the industry, you have to sell at a con. The buyers will be looking at you and your art as potential product. That's not going to be the best experience for you, but you have to endure it or you might as well stay home and watch the incoming mail. The artists working for the major companies today are expected to do a lot of promotional work for their companies. The people you see behind the tables at Marvel and DC and Dark Horse and Eternity are there to sell the company product and to mine new talent to enhance future sales. Do not ever think it is just a matter of drawing, not in the 1990s. A top artist or writer at Marvel is expected to travel to the major cons, sit on the panels, lecture, teach short seminars, sign autographs, and hype the company titles ad infinitum. Those who really work the cons put in a 14-18 hour day.

Be prepared to wait a lot. The last time I saw Kevin Eastman, the head of Mirage, he had forty appointments scheduled for the afternoon. I'm sure most of these wasted his time with Ninja turtle imitations or Ninja Jackrabbits or Ninja Sandworms, but he may have discovered a good inker or letterer among the lot.

If you approach a company table, the first thing to find out is who is looking at art. At Wonder Con in 1991, Bob Foster was looking at art and commenting on it for the Disney Company.

How you approach someone is very important at a con. When you see someone at a company table, that person is working and will be responsive to your questions, but when you see the same person on the floor or near the hot dog stand, that's break time and it is a big mistake to intercept the person and try to do business at that time. Business is done at the tables in the trade room or the dealer's room. Appointments may be made for private discussions in hotel rooms or in outside restaurants, but the artists and admin people who attend the cons resent people who intrude on their private time.

It is not a good idea to try to talk to someone immediately before or after a panel discussion. The discussion is set for a specific time period which includes a certain amount of give and take with the audience, but when the panel is over the people involved have to vacate the area so the next panel can start. If you are trying to talk to one of the panelists or show some artwork, you are showing a lack of knowledge of how things work at a con and making yourself look bad. All major cons set up specific times and places for photo and autograph sessions and if you violate the routine you will be considered an asshole. If you want to work for Marvel, go to the Marvel panels and ask your questions. Make notes or tape what is said so you can listen to it later.

Conventions have evolved over the past couple of decades and they have improved a lot along the way. Most are set up now to make things faster and more efficient, particularly for young artists trying to make contact with the companies. Study the schedule and follow the routine and make a friendly, not a hostile, impression. If you have a specific company in mind, there is nothing wrong with writing a letter to someone there ahead of time. You can send a sample of your work and say you look forward to seeing them at the upcoming convention.

Finally, if you live in an area where there is a comic book company, go there and talk to anyone who will talk to you and look at your work. Not all companies are in New York the way they were back in the early sixties. Since the days of underground comix, there are small companies all over California and the Pacific Northwest. Call them up. Stop by with your folio. Listen to what they say. Don't be afraid to ask if they know of anyone who might like to see what you are doing. The people in the comic book business know each other. Many have been at conventions together for twenty years or more and they have no problem with referring artists back and forth. Addresses of the various comic book companies are listed in their publications and most of them advertise routinely in CBG and TCJ as well as many other fanzines.

While few conventions focus on strip and panel art, some of these folks are always present at the major cons in places like Chicago, Orlando, and San Diego. Strip syndication is probably the toughest nut to crack. Jay Kennedy of King Features told me last year that they started six new strips out of several thousand submitted. A lot of people did a lot of work with no reward, because to enter that derby you have to submit six weeks of dailies and Sundays.

Panels do sell through the mail, but the pay is rock bottom. Harvey Kurtzman told me a couple of years back in San Deigo that the way he dealt with panel submissions as a cartoon editor for Vanity Fair was to look at a dozen pencils and if he liked one he would mark it for completion and ask to see it again. He said cartoon editors like to look at about a dozen pencil roughs on 8 1/2x 11 white paper and artists should always be aware that the captions may be changed. For a long time the cartoon editor at Playboy, Michelle Urry, simply farmed out old captions to specific cartoonists.

Panel ideas, like story or article ideas sent to magazines through the mail, may be xeroxed and filed to find their way into someone else's hands later. Nothing you can do about that. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, so if you should see some panel idea you submitted appear under someone else's ink somewhere, just chalk it up as a learning experience.

Good luck!
—Clay Geerdes
6/92